

13 July 1968

Philby, Harold (Kim)
Sgt. 4.8.1.2 My Silent
War

MY SILENT WAR, by Kim Philby. Grove Press, 1968, 262 pages, \$5.95.

If you decide to invest the time reading this story by "the Soviet Master Agent," don't expect James Bond—in drag or in red. Kim Philby, for thirty years a Soviet agent who was working for British intelligence and counter-intelligence, today lives in Moscow. His story is a fairly prosaic recounting of typical British civil service departmental ambitions and intrigues and is undoubtedly a much more accurate reflection of the humdrum quality of life in any bureaucracy—even the secret service—than the romantic distillation of John Le Carre, Graham Greene and Ian Fleming which have come to symbolize the life of the spy in the popular mind. Of course, no book which exposes the stupidity of J. Edgar Hoover can be all bad, and there are a couple of incidents when Philby comes close to exposure which hold one's interest. But since Soviet intelligence is undoubtedly still operating in the Western world, Philby isn't about to give away too many secrets. Philby's politics would have been interesting. But here we are left with some extremely simplistic assertions which only tell us that he became a Communist in the early 1930s and decided to become a Soviet agent as his contribution to the cause. I guess Philby is supposed to be on "our side." I wish I knew why.

I.S.